



# BEYOND THE EXHIBITS

## North Carolina Museum of History

### North Carolina Piedmont Region

What makes the Piedmont region of North Carolina unique? Farming, manufacturing, and education helped to build the Piedmont into the driving force it is today. This region contains the site of our planned capital city, Raleigh. Learn how economic and technological innovations have spurred the growth of the Piedmont.

In this educational packet:

- Read “Wish You Were Here: The Piedmont Region” from the Fall 2018 issue of the *Tar Heel Junior Historian* Magazine.
- Review the “Why is the Piedmont Unique?” guide to learn about the Piedmont Region.
- Meet the Longleaf Fairy and explore the history of North Carolina’s vast ocean of trees in “[Longleaf Fairy Tale](#)”.
- Read “The Great Philadelphia Wagon Road” from the Spring 2006 issue of the *Tar Heel Junior Historian* Magazine.
- Try your hand at making Love Feast Buns with a traditional Moravian recipe.
- [Listen to “The Mill Mother’s Lament,”](#) a song by Textile Mill worker, Ella Mae Wiggins, and then analyze the lyrics for more clues.
- Read “Furniture Making in North Carolina” from the Fall 1999 issue of the *Tar heel Junior Historian* Magazine.
- Make a paper version of a Chippendale Chair!



# Wish you were here!

## The Piedmont Region

by Cathy East



### Fast Facts

Location: the middle of the state

Number of counties: 35

Largest city: Charlotte (population: 873,363)

Average temperatures: 40°F winter,  
90°F summer

Size: 22,000 square miles

Soil: red clay

Known for: textiles, furniture, pottery, barbecue,  
State Fair, State Capitol, NC Zoo, Krispy Kreme,  
NASCAR, museums, golf, Research Triangle Park

Name: Piedmont is French for “foot of  
the mountain”

Famous first: the NC Museum of Art,  
established in 1956, in Raleigh, was the  
first state museum of art in the country.

The Piedmont of North Carolina is like the middle child in a huge family—it’s smack dab in the middle of everything! There’s always something going on.

The Piedmont has the state’s largest cities—Charlotte, Raleigh, Greensboro, and Durham—as well as historical small communities like Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough.

Here in the Piedmont, you’ll find great museums, like the Mint Museum in Charlotte, and in Raleigh, the North Carolina Museum of Art, the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, and of course, the North Carolina Museum of History.

If you like sports, you can cheer on some of the nation’s greatest teams. In the Piedmont, people battle over the blues—the Carolina blue of the UNC Tar Heels and the deep blue of Durham’s Duke University Blue Devils. Or perhaps you prefer the bold red of NC State’s Wolfpack or the black and gold of Wake Forest’s Demon Deacons. And don’t forget pro football’s Carolina Panthers—or the Carolina Hurricanes, who have brought big-time hockey to the state.

Another great perk of being in the middle of the state: we can easily jump in the car, or on a bus, train, or plane, and in a few short hours visit our “sibling,” the Mountain Region. Head in the opposite direction, and we’ll be swimming, fishing, and flying kites on the beaches of our other “sibling,” the Coastal Plain.



Opposite page: The bright lights of downtown Raleigh show clearly how development and a growing population are changing the skyline of cities in the Piedmont. Change can be exciting. But what about the natural beauty that attracted newcomers in the first place? Above: Volunteers help clean up the river at Eno River State Park in Durham. Since 1966 the Eno River Association has been raising awareness—and money—to help buy land along the river to protect it from development, so people can enjoy its waters and trails for generations to come. Image courtesy of the Eno River Association, [enoriver.org](http://enoriver.org).

We’ve always known we were special. But word has gotten out about how friendly we are and how terrific it is to live here. Cities in the Piedmont are often on many “Best” lists: the Top 10 Best areas to live, to work, to start a new career. That publicity is bringing new people from all over the country—and all over the world—to visit or set down new roots.

That’s another way the Piedmont is like a middle kid. Middle kids have to *collaborate*—that means cooperate and share ideas. Kind of like what you have to do in a group project at school.

Because we *are* a group project. Here in the Piedmont, we come from all over. From the American Indians who have lived here for thousands of years, to the Germans, English, and Scots-Irish who came here looking for a “new” world.

America is known as the “melting pot” of people and cultures. And now the Piedmont has become a melting pot, too.

You can see it in our colleges and universities. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is the oldest state university in the country—first admitting students on January 15, 1795. Today, that university system includes 17 universities across the state. Did you know that the first HBCU (historically black colleges and universities) in the country was also founded here in the Piedmont? Shaw University in Raleigh opened its doors on December 1, 1865.

You can see it in our work: from the traditional industries of textiles and agriculture to the Research Triangle Park, the largest research park in the country. It brings great minds and new ideas from all over the world to improve the state’s economic development.

And you can see it in our state government, where representatives from all over the state come together in Raleigh like one big family reunion. We argue, debate, and celebrate in a group project called democracy as we take the Piedmont—and North Carolina—into the future. 🌱

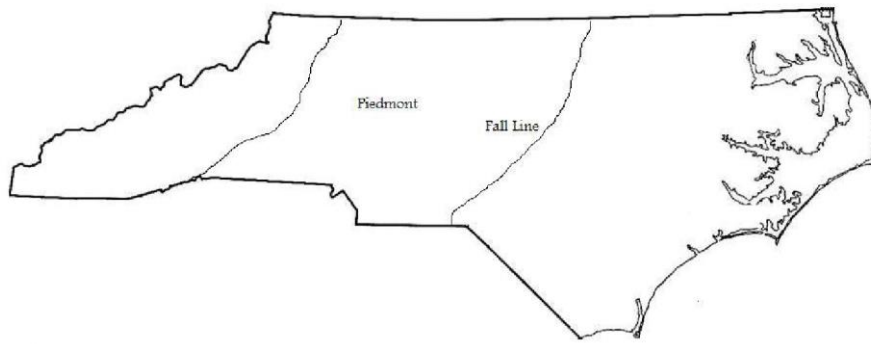
Cathy East is editor of Tar Heel Junior Historian magazine.



People with roots from all over the world call the Piedmont home. Each fall more than 50 Triangle communities—from Afghan to Vietnamese—come together to celebrate food, dance, traditions, and friendship at the International Festival in downtown Raleigh. To learn more, visit [internationalfocus.org](http://internationalfocus.org). Image courtesy of Alix Vo/Technician.



# Why is the Piedmont Unique?



## Location & Land Features

- The Piedmont is the central region of North Carolina. It is bordered on the east by the Coastal Plain region and on the west by the Mountain region. It extends from Virginia in the north to South Carolina in the south. The Piedmont comprises approximately 45 percent of North Carolina's land area. The average width of the Piedmont is approximately 200 miles. The word Piedmont means "at the base or foot of the mountains."
- The Fall Line, an imaginary line where rapids and waterfalls begin, separates the Piedmont from the Coastal Plain. Rivers that originate in the Blue Ridge Mountains flow southeast across the Piedmont to the Coastal Plain at the Fall Line.
- The Blue Ridge Mountains separate the Piedmont region from the Mountain region.
- The Piedmont is a plateau that ranges in elevation from 300 feet above sea level in the east to 1,500 feet above in the west.
- The predominant soil is red clay, and rocks are found throughout the region. The heavy clay soil is more difficult to farm than the sand and clay soil of the Coastal Plain. Piedmont farms have historically been smaller in acreage than Coastal Plain farms.
- The valleys in the Piedmont run north and south or northeast to southwest. Early travel to and from eastern towns and settled areas was difficult because of the many streams, falls, and rapids in the Piedmont. Several isolated mountain ranges are located in the Piedmont. Pilot Mountain, a monadnock, or isolated peak, stands 1,500 feet above the surrounding countryside. It once served as a landmark, or "pilot," for American Indians, explorers, and settlers

## Climate

- The climate of the Piedmont is mild, but colder than that of the Coastal Plain. Frosts begin earlier in the Piedmont and winters are more severe here than in the Coastal Plain. The Piedmont's growing season, the period between the last killing frost in the spring and the first killing frost in the fall, is shorter than the Coastal Plain's.

## Water Resources

- The most significant rivers in the Piedmont are the Yadkin, Catawba, Broad, and Saluda. These rivers flow into South Carolina and from there enter the Atlantic Ocean.
- Most Piedmont streams are narrow, shallow, and swift flowing, making navigation difficult. These streams became a source of power in later years. Early settlers built gristmills along them for grinding wheat and corn. In 1816 North Carolina's first cotton mill was built on a creek in Lincoln County.
- Most lakes in the Piedmont are man-made. In the 20th century, dams were built on Piedmont rivers and streams to create lakes for recreation, flood control, and the production of hydroelectric power. The most significant lakes are Falls Lake, Lake Gaston, Kerr Lake, Lake Hickory, Lake James, Jordan Lake, and Lake Norman.

## Forests

- Trees native to the Piedmont are mostly hardwoods such as red oak, white oak, hickory, tulip poplar, beech, and maple. Pine trees are also found throughout the region. The Piedmont lies in the central hardwood belt of the United States. Because of the abundance of hardwoods, furniture manufacturing became a major industry in the Piedmont in the 20th century.
- The Uwharrie National Forest, located northeast of Charlotte, contains 46,000 acres. The word Uwharrie is German and means "new home."

## Flora

- Strawberries, red mulberries, blackberries, huckleberries, blueberries, and elderberries are native to the Piedmont.
- Examples of native Piedmont plants are sunflower, goldenrod, and dogwood.

## Fauna

- When the first European settlers arrived, elk, buffalo, black bears, and deer were abundant on the Piedmont frontier. Small game such as squirrels and rabbits were also plentiful.
- Elk and buffalo moved west as grazing land was destroyed by early settlers, who cleared the land to plant crops. Deer, black bears, squirrels, and rabbits still inhabit this region

## Agriculture

- Tobacco, broiler chickens, cattle, silage corn, soybeans, hay, and barley are the primary agricultural crops in the Piedmont.
- Grapes are cultivated in the Yadkin valley and other areas of the Piedmont, which has the largest number of grape vineyards in North Carolina. Piedmont wineries attract many tourists.

## Minerals

- Gold
  - In 1799, 12-year-old Conrad Reed discovered a 17-pound gold nugget while fishing in a creek on his family's farm in Cabarrus County. His father did not know the nugget was gold, and in 1802 he sold it to a Fayetteville jeweler for \$3.50, one-tenth of one percent of its value.
  - North Carolina was the leading gold mining state until 1848, when gold was discovered in California. Between 1799 and 1850, North Carolina mines produced at least \$50 million worth of gold.



- In 1831 a private mint was established in Rutherford County by Christopher Bechtler Sr. The Bechtler Mint produced coins into the 1850s.
- In 1835 the United States government authorized a mint to be constructed in Charlotte. The federal mint operated there from 1837 until 1861.
- Other Minerals
  - Granite, slate, mica, and quartz are the predominant minerals in the Piedmont.
  - Mount Airy, in Surry County, has the largest open-face granite quarry in the world. The quarry covers 90 acres, and astronauts can see it from space. Geologists predict this extensive granite deposit can be mined for 500 more years.

## American Indians

- Town Creek was a settlement established by the Pee Dee Indians in the Sandhills area of the Piedmont more than 1,000 years ago. The site lies where the Town Creek and the Little River meet in Montgomery County. The Pee Dee built a center there for public meetings and religious ceremonies.
- Most American Indians in the Piedmont belonged to the Siouan language family. The Catawba, a powerful tribe, lived mainly in present-day Mecklenburg and Union counties. The tribe hunted, fished, and grew crops to survive. The Catawba and other tribes established a trading path from the Piedmont to Virginia and points northward. Today, Interstate 85 generally follows this route, known as the “Trading Path.”
- Contact with European settlers led to smallpox and other diseases that reduced the Catawba tribe’s population of 5,000. By 1738 the Catawba numbered 700; by 1784, less than 300. The 1910 census for North Carolina listed only six Catawba Indians.

## Settlement of the Backcountry

- The Piedmont was the frontier, or “backcountry,” of North Carolina in the colonial period. Lured by the availability of cheap, fertile land, the first settlers began to move into the region in 1730.
- The Piedmont was settled primarily by Scots-Irish, German, Welsh, and other immigrants moving south from Pennsylvania and Virginia and by people moving north from South Carolina.
- Most settlers in the backcountry were subsistence farmers who cultivated small tracts of land. They grew the crops they needed to survive, such as corn and wheat, and raised hogs. The farmers ate simply: corn bread, hominy, and pork. They supplemented their diet with venison and small game, as well as vegetables from the garden.
- Backcountry farmers grew few cash crops because of the lack of navigable rivers and roads to transport these crops to market. But they had to have money to pay taxes and purchase items such as shot and gunpowder. They obtained money for these necessary expenses by selling cattle, hogs, hides, and furs.
- Established in 1750, Anson County was the first seat of government in the backcountry. Rowan County was created in 1753. Salisbury, the county seat, had a courthouse and was more accessible to settlers on the frontier. It was built where the Great Wagon Road and the Trading Path crossed. Early trade routes followed the valleys. Piedmont settlers traded primarily with Petersburg, Virginia, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to the north and with Charleston, Cheraw, and Camden, South Carolina, to the south.



## The Great Wagon Road

- The Warrior's Path was a trail that ran from the Iroquois country in upstate New York to the Catawba country in North and South Carolina. Many early settlers in the Piedmont used this route, which became known as the Great Wagon Road. The road was approximately 435 miles long and began at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was also called the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road.
- Interstate 81 in Virginia generally follows the Great Wagon Road. Highway 220 in North Carolina also follows the route of this historic road.
- In 1748 Morgan Bryant, a Pennsylvania Quaker, moved from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia to establish a settlement on the Yadkin River near a crossing called the Shallow Ford. His three-month trip through the wilderness followed the Great Wagon Road. Bryant's daughter, Rebecca, married Daniel Boone, a young Quaker from Pennsylvania whose parents, Squire and Sarah Boone, moved their entire family to the Yadkin River to the Bryant settlement.

## The State Capital

- During the Revolutionary War, legislators traveled from town to town, hauling the state records with them in carts and wagons. They met in many places, including Hillsborough, Halifax, Smithfield, Fayetteville, New Bern, Tarboro, and Wake Court House. After the war different groups around the state requested that the capital be in a fixed location. People in the Piedmont strongly urged that it be centrally located.
- After much debate the 1788 State Convention voted to choose a capital site within "ten miles of Isaac Hunter's tavern" in Wake County. A capital committee chose a 1,000-acre site offered by Joel Lane, of Wakefield plantation, for 1,378 pounds. The new city was named Raleigh.
- Raleigh was a planned city with four main streets. The center lot was selected for the construction of the State House (now called the Capitol).
- Construction of the State House began in 1792. The building was first used by the legislature in 1794. It held all three branches of government. The State House was enlarged in the early 1820s.
- In 1831 the State House was destroyed in a fire that probably started while the roof was being fireproofed.
- The General Assembly approved the building of a new capitol, which was completed on the same site in 1840 at a total cost of \$532,682. This amount was more than three times the yearly general income of the state at that time.
- North Carolina's first railroad was built in Raleigh to haul stones from a local quarry to the Capitol site for construction of the new building. The railroad cars were drawn by horses and mules.

## The Growth of Piedmont Cities along Railroad Lines

- The Piedmont is the most populous region of North Carolina. Seven of the state's ten largest cities are located there; Charlotte, Raleigh, Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Durham, Cary, and High Point.
- These cities, except for Cary, grew as textile, tobacco, and furniture manufacturing increased in the late 1800s and early 1900s and railroads were built to transport the manufactured goods. Cary evolved as a bedroom community of Raleigh and Durham when the Research Triangle Park was created in the mid-20th century.



- Farming in the Piedmont changed dramatically with the invention of the steam locomotive. Farmers were able to grow cash crops that could be transported by rail to distant markets. Railroads were the preferred method of transportation for many years.
- In the mid-1800s, the North Carolina Railroad was built to run between Goldsboro, in the coastal plain, and Charlotte, in the Piedmont.
- Southern Railway was established in 1894 to connect Atlanta, Georgia, and Washington, D.C. A facility was needed midway between these two cities for maintaining and repairing the steam locomotives and railroad cars. It was built near Salisbury and named Spencer Shops after Samuel Spencer, the company's founder. By the late 1930s, 3,000 people were employed at Spencer Shops.
- Locomotives could travel 50 miles per hour in 1860, twice the speed of wagons. By 1900 they traveled 100 miles per hour.

## Furniture

- Furniture has been made in North Carolina since the colonial period. It was common for one or two craftsmen in each community to build tables, chairs, beds, and cabinets for home use. This tradition led to the creation of the state's furniture industry.
- After the Civil War, manufacturing became an important economic engine in the state, particularly in the Piedmont region. The presence of hardwood trees and the location of railroads in the Piedmont furthered the development of the furniture industry. In 1890 there were six furniture manufacturing companies in North Carolina; by 1904, there were more than 100.
- Over time many furniture companies in North Carolina became known for their high quality products. In 1924 the state's furniture manufacturers began operating their own furniture market. High Point became home to the semiannual market and now serves as the center of the North Carolina furniture industry.

## Tobacco

- With its accidental discovery in 1839, bright-leaf, or flue-cured, tobacco spawned the tobacco manufacturing industry in the North Carolina Piedmont. In turn, this industry spurred tobacco farming in the Coastal Plain.
- Chewing tobacco and smoking tobacco were the two primary types of bright-leaf products manufactured in the Piedmont before the Civil War, with production centered primarily in Winston (now Winston-Salem) and Durham. Most of the brightleaf tobacco was originally grown north of these two towns, in and around Caswell County.
- Winston was the early center for the manufacture of chewing, or plug, tobacco. R. J. Reynolds was among the early businessmen in Winston to use bright-leaf tobacco in plug tobacco. Durham developed around several smoking tobacco companies. During the Civil War, Union troops developed a taste for the bright-leaf products. One Durham tobacco company advertised its smoking tobacco under the brand name Bull Durham after the war.
- In Orange County (now Durham County), Washington Duke grew tobacco that he and his three sons made into a smoking product. By 1874 the Dukes had relocated their expanding business to Durham to be closer to the railroad.
- By 1880 North Carolina had 126 tobacco factories with a total annual output of 6.5 million pounds of plug tobacco and 4 million pounds of smoking tobacco and other tobacco products, valued together at \$2.3 million. By 1884 the Duke business was manufacturing the first machine-made cigarettes, enabling the company to capture a large share of the smoking market. The Duke family created the American Tobacco Company in 1890.



- North Carolina's tobacco industry continued to grow and prosper. New technology increased production and decreased the workforce. The production of cigarettes soon exceeded that of smoking and chewing tobacco. North Carolina farmers kept the industry well supplied with tobacco.
- In recent years the tobacco industry has seen a decline. Cigarette consumption has decreased in the United States due to health concerns and increased taxation, while competition from foreign producers has grown. In 2004 Congress ended tobacco quotas—begun in 1938 to help regulate prices for tobacco—in exchange for a onetime buyout.
- Today tobacco still holds a significant place in North Carolina's economy. R. J. Reynolds, the nation's second-largest tobacco company, is headquartered in Winston-Salem. It produces nearly one out of every four cigarettes sold in the United States and owns four of the nation's 10 best-selling brands. Tobacco is grown in 86 of the state's 100 counties, and North Carolina remains the country's largest producer.

## Textiles

- North Carolina's textile industry began soon after Eli Whitney patented the cotton gin in 1794. In 1813 Michael Schenck built the state's first cotton mill in Lincoln County. In 1818 Joel Battle built the state's second cotton mill in Rocky Mount, Nash County. Rocky Mount Mills operated until 1996.
- In 1840 North Carolina, still a predominantly agricultural state, had only 25 textile mills with 1,200 employees. By 1850 there were 2,000 textile workers in the state. As the market for cloth expanded, so did the textile industry.
- Around six new textile mills were built in North Carolina every year between 1880 and 1900. By 1900 the state had 177 mills. Most of them were in the Piedmont due to the region's fast rivers, which could be harnessed to power the mills. The Piedmont had the additional advantage of good rail service to transport finished materials to market.
- North Carolina mill owners built isolated villages to house their workers. The houses often included a garden plot. Mill owners hired ministers and teachers for these villages and maintained tight control. Employees who worked well and caused no problems could play on community athletic teams.
- Cotton has been grown in the southern Piedmont since the colonial period. It has been used locally in the region's textile mills and has also been exported. By the 1920s North Carolina was the nation's largest producer of cotton textiles. In times of war, mills manufactured uniforms and other products used by the military. The Loray Mill in Gastonia was constructed in 1900 at a cost of \$1 million.
- By 1929 there were more than 200 mill villages in the state. North Carolina led the South in textile production and began to produce higher quality cloth.
- After World War I mill management increased the hours in the workweek and implemented other practices that decreased wages and increased worker dissatisfaction. In April 1929 Loray Mill workers, joined by employees from other textile mills, went on strike.
- Violence erupted between the strikers and the Gastonia city police, and the police chief was killed. Sixteen labor union members were charged with the killing. Six of them were later found guilty of conspiracy to murder.
- In the 1930s and 1940s, the state's textile industry got a boost due to increased demand and federal contracts. This growth continued in the 1950s and was enhanced when the apparel industry moved from the Northeast to the South.



- Employment in North Carolina's textile industry peaked in 1973; in the apparel industry, in 1984. Since then a gradual decline has occurred as textile manufacturers have moved to other countries where labor and operating costs are cheaper and as global trade agreements have been enacted.

## Music

- The Piedmont's musical traditions developed in both the rural areas and the mill towns. Blues, old-time, bluegrass, and gospel music have all helped define Piedmont culture.
- Old-time music evolved from the music and instruments brought to early America by European colonists and enslaved Africans. Europeans brought their ballads and reels and stringed instruments like violins and mandolins. Africans brought their rhythmic traditions and the banjo. This style of music was preserved and passed down through generations.

## Pottery

- Pottery making developed in the Piedmont in the early 1800s because of the region's abundant clay soil. Many North Carolina potters were farmers who made and sold pottery on the side. Because of the extra income it brought in, pottery was considered a cash crop like tobacco.
- In the years following the Civil War, some Piedmont potters began creating work that was recognized for its aesthetic qualities.
- Pottery making declined in the early 1900s as inexpensive metal and glass containers became available.
- In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a revival of interest in pottery, and some potters began making decorative pieces.
- The Seagrove area has supported pottery manufacturing for almost 200 years and is an important pottery center in the Southeast. Today, over 100 potters work in Seagrove. Many local families, such as the Lucks, the Cravens, and the Owenses, continue to pass down the tradition of pottery making.
- NC Highway 705, which runs through the southern Piedmont, has been designated the "Pottery Highway."

## Research

- Created in 1959, the Research Triangle Park is the one of the oldest and largest research parks in the United States. It comprises some 7,000 acres of land in Durham and Wake counties and lies near three major research universities—Duke University in Durham, the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, and North Carolina State University in Raleigh—the "Triangle" in the name.
- Government, university, and business leaders created the Research Triangle Park as a model of research, innovation, and economic development. The purpose of the park is to create an infrastructure to attract research-based companies and utilize the well educated local workforce.
- More than 170 companies are located in the Research Triangle Park. Over 42,000 full-time employees and 10,000 contract workers are employed at the complex.
- Duke University and the University of North Carolina are leaders in medical research. Both universities have hospitals that employ the latest scientific and technological innovations.



## Banking and Finance

- Banking and finance are major industries in North Carolina and are centered in Charlotte. Based on the dollar amount of controlled assets, Charlotte is the second largest banking city in the United States, after New York City.
- In 1927 the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond opened a Charlotte branch.
- In the 1960s and 1970s, the state's banking institutions began to expand when laws were changed to allow banks to do business outside their home counties. Also during this period, changes to federal banking laws provided for cross-country mergers of banks. As a result of these changes, North Carolina National Bank (NCNB) and Wachovia greatly expanded their operations.
- Through mergers and acquisitions, NCNB eventually became Bank of America, the largest bank in the United States and the second-largest bank in the world. Wachovia also grew steadily until it was acquired by Wells Fargo.
- The economic downturn of the early 2000s affected many financial institutions. Some banks closed, and others accepted federal funding to stay afloat.
- Five of the nation's top 25 banks operate in Charlotte.



# The Great Philadelphia Wagon Road

By Michael O. Hartley and Martha B. Hartley

From *Tar Heel Junior Historian* 45:2 (spring 2006).

Imagine that you and your friends are on a trip far from home. It is October 1753, and you are the Moravian Single Brothers—there are fifteen of you on this journey. Your group is traveling to North Carolina to begin a new settlement, and the route you follow all the way from Pennsylvania does not yet have its famous name: the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road.

You mostly walk. To carry your gear—tools, tents, and food—you have a large, heavy wagon being pulled by a team of strong horses. The road through the woods is sometimes just a path that you must clear of trees. You must help the horses by pushing the wagon as they strain up long, steep hills and by guiding the team across streams and rivers. It is very important that everyone works together. At night, the group finds a comfortable camping place near a spring or clear creek. Everyone has jobs, and Erich cooks meals over a campfire—the chicken is especially delicious. You sleep in blankets on the ground under the stars, sometimes putting up a tent. Gottlob likes to sleep in a hammock that he strings between two trees. After breakfast, the journey continues. Interesting people are met along the way: innkeepers, millers, or farmers from whom you buy grains, hay for your horses, and food. Most of the people you encounter speak English or German. You and your friends speak German, and some know English. As you get closer to your destination, you see fewer and fewer people. You look forward to your new home and feel the excitement of pioneering into the North Carolina frontier on this long road.

At the time of the Single Brothers' trip, much of the Piedmont and all of the Mountains of North Carolina made up the frontier. The Piedmont, with its rolling hills, and the Mountains, with their crags and steep slopes, are very different from the flat Coastal Plain of eastern North Carolina. They are different in their topography, and they differ in the way they were settled during the colonial period.

Early European immigration to North America usually brings to mind ships sailing across the Atlantic Ocean, and this certainly rings true for the means of colonial settlement along the East Coast of the United States. We may also have images of settlers traveling to locations not accessible by boat, much like the Single Brothers did, and this is how much of the interior or backcountry of North Carolina was populated. In colonial America, thousands of people used the very important road that guided the Single Brothers and which might even be called a “colonial highway.” In our state it is known as the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road, the Great Wagon Road, or simply the Wagon Road. In Virginia, it is called the Carolina Road, because it led to Carolina.



Before people began to settle the interior of present-day North Carolina, there was a focus on the coastal area. Jamestown was the important English settlement in Virginia that began in 1607, and the Chesapeake Bay (into which the James River flows) became a vital center of the English colonies. Charles Town (now Charleston) in present-day South Carolina was established by the English in 1670 and in effect pushed Spanish settlement south into Georgia and Florida. Between these two great ports, the Carolina coastline was made fairly safe, and by 1735 towns such as Bath, Edenton, New Bern, Beaufort, and Georgetown (South Carolina) had been established.

South Carolina ports played a role in the settlement of the interior of North Carolina. The histories of North and South Carolina are intertwined, just as the river systems bind together their topography. In both states, ship and boat travel effectively ends at the fall line, where, as its name suggests, waterfalls begin. Because rivers in the Piedmont are difficult to navigate, early Europeans were unable to travel upstream by boat to the places that became Winston-Salem or Charlotte, for example. It was not until the 1740s that this backcountry began to be settled, and the people who journeyed there did not travel from the eastern part of the colony. They came from the north by wagon, foot, or horseback.

In the early 1700s, the Coastal Plain, particularly along the navigable rivers, began to fill with immigrants. The Piedmont and Mountains, however, remained lands of the American Indians who had inhabited the area for thousands of years. European immigrants were pouring into the northern colonies, especially Pennsylvania and Maryland, in the 1730s and 1740s. As these colonies became populated with newcomers, particularly German and Scots-Irish, they became congested. People began to look south for potential new homes. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was an especially busy port in the 1700s, and many early backcountry North Carolina settlers entered America there. Conveniently, the Great Wagon Road to Virginia and the Carolinas had its origins in the vicinity of Philadelphia.

Immigrants began to travel south in small numbers and then in a constant stream of people that numbered in the thousands. Trails that had been used by American Indians for many years became routes into the frontier. In the 1740s one of the first groups of people to enter backcountry North Carolina was “the Bryant settlement.” The leader, a Quaker named Morgan Bryant, followed a path from Pennsylvania into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and first settled there. Later, in 1748, he led a group of people farther south into North Carolina, where they settled on the Yadkin River near a crossing called the Shallow Ford. The path Bryant pioneered would become the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road. Shortly after Bryant and his family and friends moved to the Yadkin River, other settlers followed his lead into North Carolina. Some claimed land along Town Fork Creek, a tributary of the Dan River. These settlements consisted of families living on their own farms; no towns existed.

With affordable land prices and a loosely established state church, backcountry North Carolina had attracted such a sufficient population by 1753 that 348 inhabitants signed a petition asking the colonial assembly to divide Anson County so that they would not have



to travel so far for courthouse business. Rowan County was created, with Salisbury soon established as the county seat.

Also in 1753 a Protestant religious group of German-speaking people called Moravians bought a hundred-thousand-acre tract of land between Bryant's settlement on the Yadkin River and the Town Fork settlement. The Moravians had big plans for this tract that they named der Wachau, or Wachovia (now Winston-Salem). They were already well established in several places in Pennsylvania but wanted a large area where they could build a community around a way of life based on their religious beliefs. The Moravians were well organized and educated people who used their talents to quickly create a stable urban system, and Wachovia played a critical role in the backcountry's development.

The Moravians sent to begin the settlement of Wachovia were a group of unmarried men, called Single Brothers, who were chosen because each had skills that would be critical to successful settlement (minister, business manager, doctor, cook, carpenter, cooper, farmer, shoe maker, millwright, turner, tailor, baker, gardener, and so forth). For their trip from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, to their new land in North Carolina, the group used the path that Bryant had taken. The Moravians kept a daily journal of the trip, recording their location and the general condition of the road and countryside; any farms, inns, or mills visited; people encountered; news heard; meals eaten; game shot; places where they bought hay for their horses; and miles journeyed.

The Single Brothers wrote about the pioneering 1748 trip by Bryant, whom they called "Margan Bryand." They knew that the trip had taken Bryant three months from the Shenandoah Valley to the Yadkin River, and they recorded that at one place Bryant had had to take the wheels off of his wagon and carry it to the top of a hill in pieces. In 1753, when the Single Brothers made their way to North Carolina, the upper reaches of the Great Wagon Road in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and northern Virginia were fairly well traveled, but as they came farther south, the road was less traveled and conditions less favorable. The Single Brothers were using a large Pennsylvania wagon. Two days into their trip, they had a blacksmith cut it down three inches in width—which made the difference in whether the wagon fit the ruts of the road. Fording rivers and creeks was a regular task. Descending steep hillsides was dangerous, and the men would hold the wagon back with ropes. In places, the Single Brothers' wagon became stuck in deep mud, and they spent hours freeing it. Sometimes they cut new sections of road.

Ten days before reaching Wachovia, from a hilltop in Virginia, they saw Pilot Mountain and knew Carolina and their new land were near.

The Single Brothers' trip lasted about six weeks. Upon arrival, they immediately began to build a town that they named Bethabara. It was located a mile and a half off the Great Wagon Road, which ran through Wachovia and on to the Shallow Ford at the Yadkin River. Two years later, the Moravians in Pennsylvania sent married couples and more Single Brothers to live in Bethabara. Because the neighbors on the Yadkin and the Town Fork, and others who had followed them, lived on farms spread across the landscape, the new town became a very important center. It had a doctor, a minister, and craftsmen and

tradesmen to make shoes, hats, clothes, pottery, and other goods needed on the frontier. The Moravians traded actively with coastal ports. Deerskins brought into Wachovia were often traded for Moravian goods, and the Moravians sent wagonloads of deerskins regularly to Charleston.

The 1750s were also years of unrest because of the French and Indian War and war with the Cherokee. The American Indians had been ill-treated and were attempting to dislodge settlers from the frontier. A palisade was built around Bethabara for protection, and on many occasions outlying settlers fled to what was then known as Fort Bethabara for safety during Indian raids. Families sometimes stayed several months at a time. A second Moravian town, Bethania, was established in 1759 three miles away on the opposite side of the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road, which the Moravians called the König Strasse (or King's Road). Bethania and Bethabara were crucial frontier strongholds during the turmoil, which largely ended in the early 1760s.

The Moravians had worked on the Great Wagon Road to the Shallow Ford, where it crossed the Yadkin River and continued south to Salisbury. More and more people were traveling that way, pushing on into the backcountry of upper South Carolina and Georgia. Ultimately, the Great Wagon Road was extended there.

Wachovia grew more complex as the central town of Salem was begun in 1766, and additional Moravian congregations became established. This urban center of crafts and trade attracted further settlement, and the North Carolina backcountry experienced enormous population growth in the 1760s and 1770s. Germans and Scots-Irish continued entering the colony along the Great Wagon Road. The frontier was pushed westward to the Mountains as land was cleared, fields planted, and homes built. Unlike eastern North Carolina—where farms, called plantations, often were large and spread out and used the labor of enslaved people, and where the Church of England was established—western North Carolina was inhabited mostly by subsistence farmers on relatively small holdings. They included Quakers, Lutherans, German Reformed, Moravians, Dunkards, Baptists, and Methodists. Most small farms in the backcountry had few or no slaves.

The flow of settlement continued southward, but the Great Wagon Road was also a route of communication and trade with traffic going northward. It resembled a colonial interstate highway, similar to today's I-40 or I-95. As a matter of fact, Interstate 81 through Virginia generally follows the route of the Great Wagon Road, and Highway 220 continues that corridor into North Carolina. The route can then be followed into the Wachovia area on existing roads and abandoned roadbeds visible as deep cuts through the woods. Many of the roads we use today are refinements of such earlier routes.

As road systems survive, so do people whose ancestors came as settlers down the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road. They came seeking fertile land at a good price, new opportunities, religious tolerance, and bright futures for their children. More than 260 years have passed, and many generations have been part of North Carolina's backcountry history since Morgan Bryant, the Moravian Single Brothers, and others pioneered the Great Wagon Road.



At the time of the publication of this article, Michael O. Hartley is an anthropologist and archaeologist who serves as director of archaeology at Old Salem Inc. Martha B. Hartley is a preservation planner who conducts research at Old Salem. For twenty years, the Hartleys have worked in the historic resource of Wachovia. “‘There is None Like It’: The South Fork Settlements and the Development of Colonial Wachovia” is the report from their 2003 study supported by a grant from the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology.

# **East Hills Moravian Love Feast Buns Recipe**

**Makes about 30 buns**

- 2 packages yeast
- 1/2 cup warm water
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup hot, dry mashed potatoes, unseasoned
- 1/2 cup milk, scalded and cooled
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 tablespoons orange rind
- 2 tablespoons lemon rind
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon mace
- 1-1/2 pounds flour

1. Mix together the yeast and water. Let sit for 5 minutes.
2. Cream together sugar and butter. Add and mix in well the potatoes, milk, and eggs.
3. Add the dissolved yeast mixture.
4. Mix spices into the yeast mixture. Add in enough flour to make a soft dough.
5. Knead dough on well floured table. Form into ball and place in greased bowl. Cover with cloth and let rise in warm place until double in size (about 2 hours). Pinch down; let rise again 5-10 minutes. Flouring hands well (dough will be sticky), form dough into small (3 oz) balls. Place on cookie sheet. Slash tops with razor blade to release air. Cover and let rise again till double in size. Bake at 350 degrees until golden all over (about 15-20 minutes).



## ***The Mill Mother's Lament*** **By Ella Mae Wiggins**

Labor unions and Communism were closely linked during the late 1920s, and sentiments ran high against both throughout North Carolina. In addition, local government officials and mill owners refused to give up power to a union. Despite the dangers of supporting the union, one worker, Ella May Wiggins, became an ardent unionist. She also tackled the task of organizing African American workers. To recruit members, she made influential speeches and sang powerful ballads, like *The Mill Mother's Lament*, which outlined the harsh realities of a Mill Worker's life. In September 1929 Wiggins was ambushed and murdered on her way to a union rally. The Gastonia protest collapsed after her death, the union too weak to challenge the manufacturers. The stock market crash occurred a month later and brought further wage decreases as well as layoffs.

[Listen to a rendition of \*The Mill Mother's Lament\* here.](#)

We leave our home in the  
morning,  
We kiss our children good-bye,  
While we slave for the bosses,  
Our children scream and cry.

And when we draw our money,  
Our grocery bills to pay,  
Not a cent to spend for clothing,  
Not a cent to lay away.

And on that very evening,  
Our little son will say,  
"I need some shoes, dear mother,  
And so does sister May."

How it grieves the heart of a  
mother,  
You every one must know,  
But we can't buy for our children,  
Our wages are too low.

Now listen to me, workers,  
Both women and men,  
We are sure to win our union,  
If all would enter in.

I hope this will be a warning,  
I hope you will understand,  
And help us win our victory,  
And lend to us a hand.

It is for our little children  
That seem to us so dear,  
But for us nor them, dear workers,  
The bosses do not care.

But understand, all workers,  
Our union they do fear,  
Let's stand together, workers,  
And have a union here.

## Writing Prompts for *The Mill Mother's Lament*

- How does the music and lyrics convey what was happening during this period in history?

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- Why do you think Ella Mae Wiggins decided to use a song as a protest tool instead of another medium, such as writing a poem, writing an essay, or making a speech?

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- What musical instruments do you recognize? What style of music is being played? Is it still played today?

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- Can you think of other protest songs or music? How does it differ from the mill workers' music? What does it have in common with the music you heard?

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- What other ways is music used to express a society's concerns?

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- If you were writing a protest song today, what would it concern? Why? What images would you use in your music?

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# Furniture Making in North Carolina

By Richard Eller

From *Tar Heel Junior Historian* 39:1 (fall 1999).

Images may differ from those in the original article.

You live in a state known worldwide for the furniture it makes. More people buy furniture made in North Carolina than in any other place on earth. The honor of “furniture capital of the world” is a development of the twentieth century, though it had its beginnings in the late 1800s.

The Civil War forced a change in the economies of North Carolina towns. Community leaders looked for ways to make their towns productive. Manufacturing began to replace farming. Many communities turned to textile manufacturing as an industrial employer for their citizens. However, in several communities, furniture became the major product.

For centuries, craftsmen had made furniture in North Carolina. Usually, one or two specialized craftsmen in each community were hired to build tables, chairs, beds, and cabinets for home use. This tradition helped to create the furniture industry in North Carolina.

In the late nineteenth century, New York and Michigan became the furniture capitals of the nation. Both had great forests, and factories that existed before the Civil War. New York City hosted an annual furniture market in which manufacturers displayed new styles that store owners could purchase and, in turn, sell to consumers.

In 1880 North Carolina’s first furniture factory was built—White Furniture Company in Mebane. The creation of furniture companies in High Point and Lenoir followed as the nineteenth century came to a close. The forests of the Uwharrie Mountains near High Point and the Brushy Mountain chain around Lenoir provided ample raw materials from which to make furniture. Men leaving their farms to look for dependable work began to craft furniture from these materials.

Furniture making as a business exploded at the turn of the century in North Carolina. In 1890 only six companies had been established for furniture production, but by 1904 more than one hundred additional enterprises existed. Behind textiles and tobacco, furniture became the state’s biggest industry. During the early twentieth century, some companies came and went, but several, such as Broyhill, Thomasville, and Drexel, became giants in the industry.

In the early days, southern furniture was considered to be of medium to cheap quality. R. O. Huffman of Drexel Furniture joked that a retailer once told him that he was sometimes tempted to “throw away the furniture and sell the crates it came in.” Eventually, though, the quality of the furniture improved to the point that buyers looked to North Carolina instead of other states for home furnishings.



By 1924 the state became so famous for its furniture that North Carolina manufacturers began operating their own furniture market. High Point, home to the semiannual furniture market, now serves as the focal point of the North Carolina furniture industry. The market takes place each spring and fall and attracts buyers worldwide.

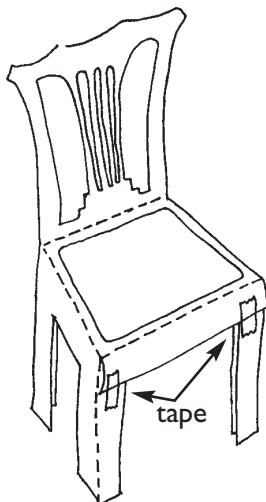
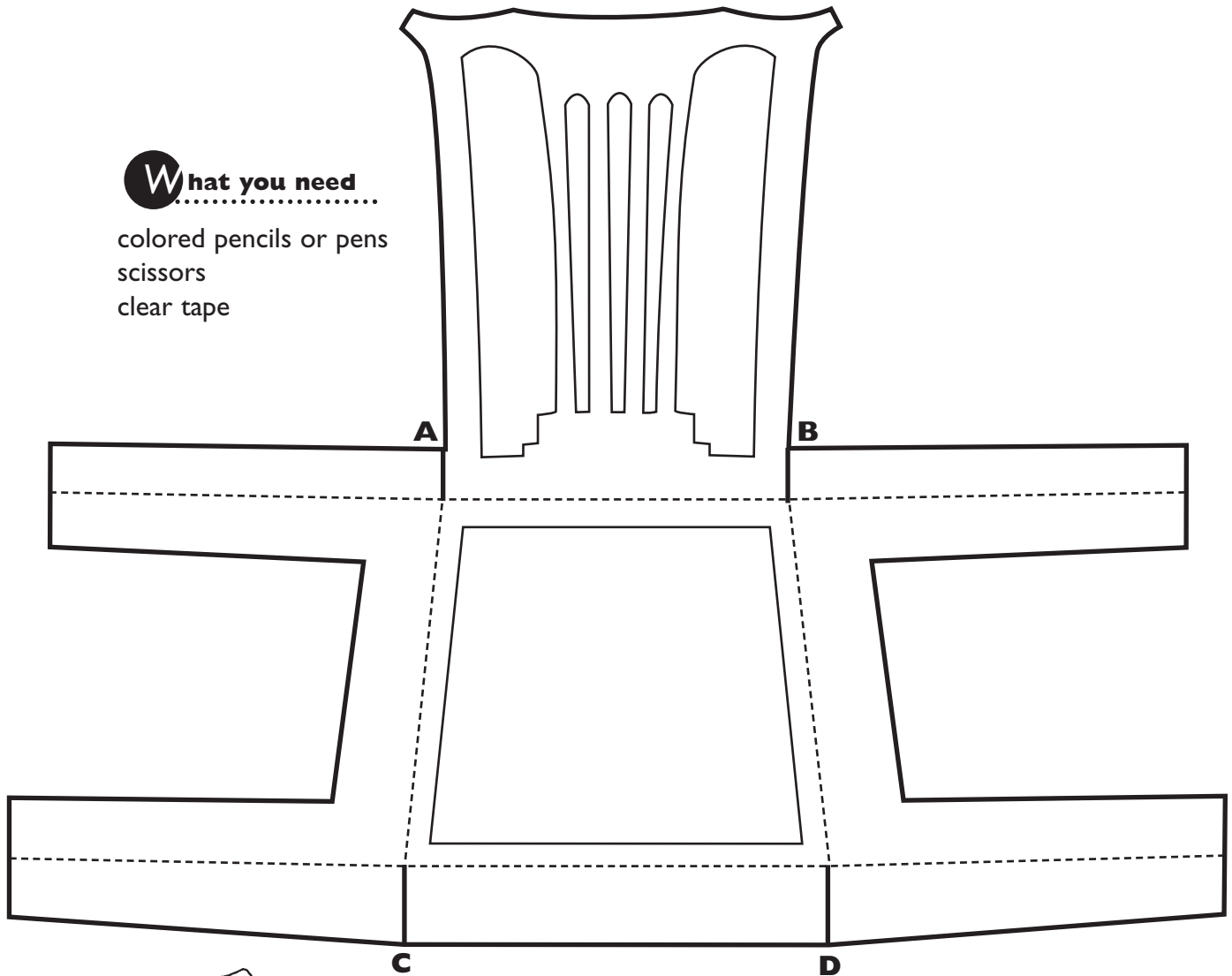
Through the determined effort of a number of manufacturers and their workers at the dawn of this century, North Carolina rocketed to the forefront of furniture production. “Furniture capital of the world” is a title we all can share as part of the industrial heritage of the Old North State.

# Chippendale Chair

Here's a Chippendale chair for you to fold. This style was popular in England and in the American colonies before and during the Revolutionary War.

## What you need

colored pencils or pens  
scissors  
clear tape



**1.** Color the chair with pencils or pens. If you use pens, let the paper dry before cutting the chair out.

**2.** Cut the chair out along the thick black lines, including slits A–D.

**3.** Fold the legs and back of the chair as shown. Tape the front of the chair seat to the front legs to make the chair stable.



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